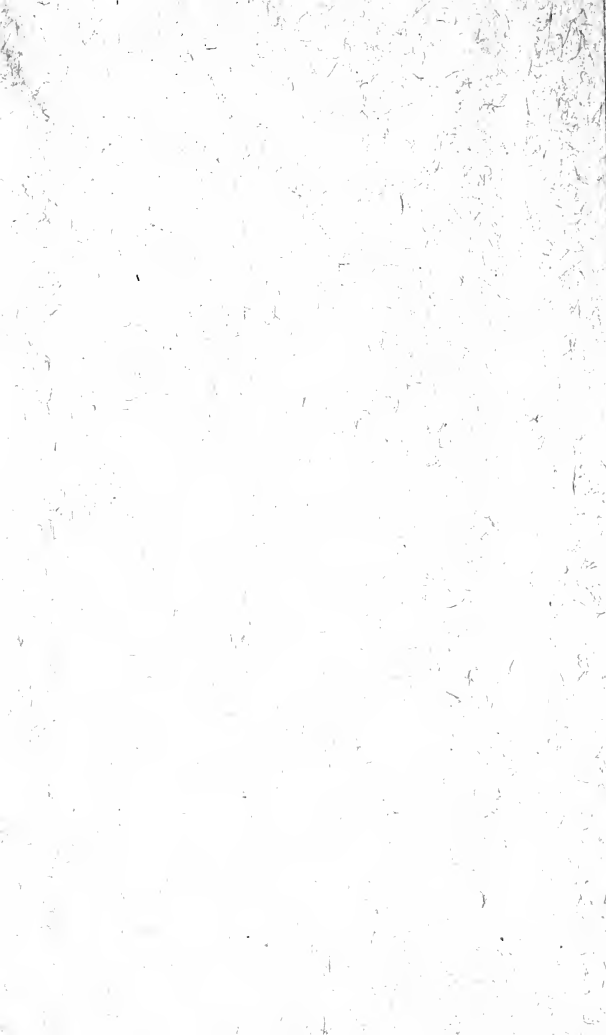


NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07997860 1



Tomkins
-
ZIK

1904
21K

Following Christ

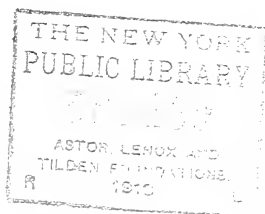
PRACTICAL THOUGHTS FOR DAILY
CHRISTIAN LIVING

BY

FLOYD W. TOMKINS, S. T. D.

Rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Phila.
Author of "The Christian Life," etc.

PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO
PUBLISHERS



Copyrighted, 1901
By GEORGE W. JACOBS & Co

Dedicated
TO MY DEAR WIFE

1888

PREFACE

THESE suggestions for daily Christian living claim no originality. But having been published in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, and apparently found helpful, they are put in permanent form with the hope and prayer that they may bring comfort and guidance in the battle.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I.—ABIDING IN CHRIST . . .	9
II.—OUR STEWARDSHIP . . .	23
III.—PATIENCE . . .	37
IV.—JOYOUS SERVICE . . .	51
V.—THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS .	65
VI.—DO NOT WORRY . . .	79
VII.—ARE YOU DOING YOUR BEST .	93
VIII.—ALWAYS READY . . .	107
IX.—THINGS THAT ENDURE . .	121
X.—LIVES THAT LIFT UP . . .	137

I
ABIDING IN CHRIST

I

ABIDING IN CHRIST

ST. JOHN xv. 1-10

Prayer

Grant me, Lord, the heavenly wisdom, that I may learn to seek and find Thee above all, to taste and love Thee before all, understanding all things as they are according to the ordering of Thy wisdom. Grant me to turn away from him that flatters me, quietly to bear with him that crosses me. For this is the great wisdom: Not to be moved with every windy word, not to give an ear unto the siren wickedly enticing us. Then our early steps will lead to peace.—*Imitation of Christ.*

THIS abiding is not a mere emotion or a feeling, but a fact. We abide in a house when we live in it, when we love it, when the things in

Following Christ

it are dear to us, when we are happy and contented. So when we live as Christ would have us, when we love Him, when we find the things He loves dear to us, when we are happy in thinking of Him and talking of Him, then we are abiding in Him. There is, of course, a deeper meaning in the words which we cannot understand, for Jesus says we are to be joined to Him as He is joined to the Father. But that is God's part. Our part is to know that Christ is near us, to love and trust Him and to be at peace in Him, quiet, confident, happy.

LOVE.

I. There are four anchors which will hold us if we cast them and keep them. The first is love. Doubtless all Christians think they love God, and yet if they compare their Christian love with their human love for their friends, they

Abiding in Christ

must see how weak it is. If I love my friend I let him know it; I cannot help it. It may be only by a look, it may be by a word, or by seeking his presence, or by constant thought. No two persons can love each other and keep the love a secret very long. And yet how cold our affection for Jesus is! How many of us have ever told Him of our love? How many of us have found delight in reading of Him, in thinking of Him, in lifting our eyes and looking into His face? We grow tired so easily, and the thought of God puts a kind of unnatural restraint upon us, such as children feel in the presence of strangers or persons older than themselves. That results from our self-consciousness. We know how unworthy we are, and so we are ill at ease, nervous, troubled, when we think of Jesus being near. A great deal of our early training is responsible for

Following Christ

this. We were taught that God was watching us, angry with us, ready to punish us, and that He had little sympathy with our pleasures and desires. That is all false. Christ is our dear Friend. He is not a spy or a severe Master, but a Brother. And if we only cease thinking so much about ourselves and our sins and our mistakes, and simply love Him, this awkwardness of our religion will disappear. Beyond the love of your dearest friend, beyond the beauty of the most beautiful thing you have ever seen, beyond the gentleness of your own mother, is the loving nature of Jesus. Just love Him, and tell Him that you love Him, and you will "abide in Him."

TRUST.

II. Again we see how little confidence we have in Christ when we compare our relation to Him with

Abiding in Christ

our relation to one another. My friend tells me he will do a certain thing for me, and I know he will do it. My friend stands by me in an hour of necessity, and helps; he holds my hand and calms me; he takes my burden and carries it for me, and I believe in him. But the dear Lord who is waiting to do all this for me, and to do it better than any friend possibly can do it, has only doubt and hesitation from me. I do not trust Him. Ah, the sadness of it! Now if we can trust the Christ we abide in Him through our very confidence. He surrounds us with His love; He calms our fears; He gives peace. That is a wonderful passage in Drummond's "Ideal Life": "Christ's life was a life of perfect composure. To come near it even now is to be calmed and soothed. Go to it at any moment and the great calm is there. There was no frenzy about His life, no ex-

Following Christ

citement. In quietness and confidence the most terrible days sped past. Men came to Him, and they found not restlessness, but Rest. Composure is to be had for faith." Simple trust in Him to-day, when trouble surges around, when the way is hidden, when we are anxious—simple trust in Him will make us one with Him.

PRAYER.

III. It is the old method and the true method. To pray is to abide in Christ. For prayer is not asking for something; it is communion; it is walking with God.

"Oh! when the heart is full—when bitter
thoughts

Come crowding thickly up for utterance,
And the poor, common words of courtesy
Are such a very mockery—how much
The bursting heart may pour itself in prayer!"

God is there to listen while I tell
Him the story. God is waiting for

Abiding in Christ

me to open my very soul to Him. Repression of emotion is death; expression of need and hunger is life. So did Jacob pray when he was left alone by the ford Jabbok. (Gen. xxxii. 24.) So did David when he lay all night upon the earth. (2 Sam. xii. 16.) Such moments know no reticence. The very heart pours itself out to a Father who is so ready to listen. And at the end there comes a consciousness that God really cares and that His arms are shielding and His love is blessing. When we give up ourselves wholly, then God opens His mercy and surrounds us. We abide in Him.

WORK.

IV. But abiding is not idleness. When I work for my friend I bind him to me; we become one. In Richard Harding Davis' "Soldiers of Fortune" there is a fine touch of fire in the way the dead man Stuart

Following Christ

was left. "Hope slipped past him and picked up Stuart's sword that had fallen from his wrist to the floor and laid it on the soldier's body, and closed his hands upon its hilt. One who had known him among his own people would have seen in the attitude and in the profile of the English soldier, as he thus lay, a likeness to his ancestors of the Crusades, who lay carved in stone in the village church with their faces turned to the sky and their hands pressed upward in prayer." Battle is as much a part of abiding in Christ as devotion. Christ needs no cowards; He, the King of kings, on His white horse, going forth conquering and to conquer, needs men of courage, and such only can enter into real communion with Him. What am I doing for my Master's Kingdom? What am I sacrificing in my zeal for His righteousness? Does sin find in me an implacable

Abiding in Christ

foe? Do I stand against dishonor and impurity with my sword hilt in my hand, and am I ready to die pressing it? Christ died on a cross for the world's redemption; am I one with Him in this? "Abide in Me," but not as a coward, a trembling fugitive, a reed shaken with the wind, but as a man of such fine love that thy King's battle is thine! When men work for Christ, then they know what it is to be really His.

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "But I am not conscious of this peace which comes through abiding in Christ." Do not stop to test your pulse; simply love and trust, and pray, and fight. Peace comes not with observation, but as a result of service.

"I lived for myself, I thought for myself,
For myself and none beside,
Just as if Jesus had never lived,
As if He had never died."

Following Christ

So many people are selfish in their religion, thinking always of how they ought to "feel" and how they ought to "believe." Look to Christ, and let self alone for awhile, and all will be well.

2. "I am so anxious always." That is because you are studying your work as if it were yours and not Christ's. Think of all you have to do as part of your King's business, and see if calm trust does not result.

3. "Do we really live in Him when we love and trust and serve?" Remember what St. Paul says: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The dear Master so joins us with Himself that we never think of any action as ours alone.

4. "Is abiding in Him a necessity if I would be useful?" Certainly. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." But if we abide in Him, we

Abiding in Christ

bear much fruit. No life is useful to man or God which is not, consciously or unconsciously, united to Christ.

Blessed Master, take me and make me one with Thee. I am weary of wandering, weary of selfish struggle. I cannot live alone. Let me live with Thee and in Thee. And, oh, dear Jesus, when all else seems to fail and I cannot see my way, let me feel Thine arms around me, and let me hear Thy dear voice saying: "Fear not, for thou art Mine." Amen.

II

OUR STEWARDSHIP

II

OUR STEWARDSHIP

ST. LUKE xii. 42-48

Prayer

O, Lord, by all Thy dealings with us, whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness, let us be brought to Thee. Let us value no treatment of Thy grace simply because it makes us happy or because it makes us sad, because it gives us or denies what we want; but may all that Thou sendest us bring us to Thee, that knowing Thy perfectness, we may be sure in every disappointment that Thou art still loving us, and in every darkness that Thou art still enlightening us, and in every enforced idleness that Thou art still using us; yea, in every death that Thou art giving us life, as in His death Thou didst give life to Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.—*Phillips Brooks*.

THE beautiful prayer with which we open our study teaches the full

Following Christ

meaning of life. That meaning we must grasp and hold if we would be strong men and women. It is impossible for a man to live a true life who does not understand what life means. And although there are many mysteries and troubles which we cannot undertake to explain singly, yet taken together with the rest of human experiences they form a mosaic which any man can see and enjoy if only he will open his eyes and exercise his reason.

The word "stewardship" is a key to unlock life. God has placed every man here with a charge to fulfill. The power he possesses is granted to him that he may be able to do his work. His faithfulness is measured by his keeping this charge constantly in mind, as the musician keeps his theme constantly in mind through all the variations and treatments. He masters life just in proportion to the fidelity with which he advances

Our Stewardship

his work. His crown of victory at last will depend upon his loyalty and effort as a steward of God.

There are two or three encouraging features of this stewardship which we will study. The first is

ASSOCIATION.

I. If God has thrown me into the world and given me a task just to prove me, or to test me, or even to watch me, as an old-fashioned school-teacher used to do when he gave a sum on the blackboard to his pupils, then I can find no inspiration in living. The reason modern teaching has made such an advance is because masters have lost their old watchdog characteristics, and impressed upon their scholars the usefulness of all they are asked to do. And the reason religion is so much more attractive to-day than it used to be is because it has been unfolded, and we can see what it all means.

Following Christ

I am here to do something, and that something needs to be done, and in doing it I am working with my heavenly Father. The steward of old was not a mere slave; but he entered into the Master's plans and hopes. So we can enter into God's plans and know that we are associated with Him in carrying them to a glorious completion. This idea of association is a part of modern enlightenment. Political Economy teaches the necessity of common effort for a common end. The workman must understand that he is working with as well as for his employer. The clerk must know he is not a machine, but a co-laborer with the man who has called him. Profit-sharing is one of our modern suggestions which has grown out of this truth of association; the steward has a right to share in the results he has helped to bring. The disuse of old terms—"slave," and

Our Stewardship

“hired man,” and “hands”—shows that we are becoming more truly brothers. Now take the same truth and apply it to life as being the relationship between ourselves and God. I am working with God as well as for God. I am not His slave, or His forced workman, or one whom He allures with glowing promises, but His son, His steward, His friend, guarding His interests and mine, helping His world and mine, trying to care for His children who are my brothers. I find great inspiration in this view of life.

And again, the steward had back of him in all that he did the

II. POWER

of the Master. He was not alone with his single word and personal strength. When he said, “This is to be done,” he meant, “The Master wishes this to be done.” The travel-worn ambassador may be very in-

Following Christ

significant when he stands before the king with a message. But the king knows that back of the travel-worn man stands the power of a great nation which he dare not defy. It is consciousness of support which everywhere holds life and makes it brave. Put my boy away out on the prairie miles from home, and he feels alone and helpless. Put him in his home with father and mother near and he knows he can rely upon help when he needs it. Let me look at myself as beating my way all alone through hard experiences, while the heavens are silent, and no power above or around cares whether I succeed or fail, and I might as well give up. I am a fool to strive singly against such odds. But let me know that God is there, above, around, within, a Power to support, a Power to whom I can appeal and not in vain, and at once I am inspired. I cannot fail. God

Our Stewardship

is behind me. It is this knowledge that gives such grand self-respect to men. However poor they may consciously be, yet they are God's stewards, and they stand erect at the thought. However they may be opposed, yet they have the infinite strength of the Almighty behind them, and can afford to wait till God arises. Oh, the joy of it! Oh, the comfort! God is back of me—I am His steward!

And yet again, the steward had the right to call upon the

MASTER'S WEALTH.

III. If he had anything to do which demanded more than he possessed, the Master's resources were his. He was the keeper of the Master's treasures. He was the ruler over the household. This increased his responsibility, but it also wonderfully increased his freedom of action. Often we men and women

Following Christ

feel so helpless. Some great demand is made upon us. Some work calls for which we know we are unfitted. Some danger faces us, and we shrink back and are afraid. Now think—we are God's stewards. Back of us lie all the riches of His wealth. Ignorant? Why, I have at my call all God's wisdom. Weak? Why, I have back of me all God's strength. Afraid? Why, I have the God of Heaven and earth to support me. God loves to have us claim our rights. If He has placed me here then He is bound (we say it reverently, but surely) to take care of me, if I try to do my part. The parent is responsible for the child till the child is mature; and that law is based upon the great fact that he who creates must nourish the creation. The beasts nurse their young; the mother's vitality is for the child; the father's wealth is almost at the son's command. How much more,

Our Stewardship

then, are all of God's riches for our use, if only we will call for them! Oh, the endless wealth which our Father is holding for our use! Wisdom which can never fail, if we trust it rather than our own conceit. Love which can know no bitterness or petty jealousy if we will use it instead of our own human prejudice. Courage which shall never falter if we will call for it instead of resting upon our foolish little human bravado. All these riches of God are ours as His stewards. And they will never fail to come in answer to our call if we are honest and sincere.

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "It all seems so clear as I read. But to-morrow I get up and begin to work, and I am perplexed." That is because you do not apply the truth to the life. Take the first thing you have to do and think how

Following Christ

God has asked you to do it for Him, and that you have His power, and all His riches to support you. And then go all through the day with the same truth in mind, and see if it does not help you.

2. "But you do not say anything of the terror of God which the unfaithful must feel." No. God loves us, and He draws us by love. I should not care much for a servant who did my will because he was afraid of me. If we are good stewards because we are afraid to be bad then we are unprofitable. The true steward loves God.

3. "Sometimes we make great mistakes." Of course. But mistakes vary in their character. If I simply forget or neglect or grow careless about my responsibility, then I may well be ashamed. But if I honestly try to do right, and fail because of some human weakness, then God's mercy forgives.

Our Stewardship

On the other hand I think we must be brave enough to run the risk of making mistakes. Life is big, and demands big ventures and large-hearted efforts. God will overrule mistakes and make them blessings if only the steward is loyal.

4. "Is a servant the same as a steward? I thought God called us to serve Him?" Yes, a steward is the same as a servant. Only we must remember that he who truly serves is he who helps, and real service is measured by love. Never think you are a good servant because you are plodding along in steady, hard obedience to commands. You are only a true servant when you love God and know that He loves and trusts you.

Dear, dear Master, I praise Thee for my stewardship, and for Him, my Saviour, who taught me how to

Following Christ

serve. Keep me from working as a slave. Make me to know that, unworthy though I am, I am associated with Thee. May I always rely upon Thy power, and fall back upon Thy riches in all times of my poverty. Make me a good steward, dear Lord, and keep me loyal to Thee. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

III
PATIENCE

III

PATIENCE

ST. MATTHEW xviii. 21-35

Prayer

O, Thou for whom the strife was strong,
Thou who hast sung the conqueror's song,
Uphold me through the holy war!
Make me a smiling conqueror.

I fight upon Thy battlefield;
Thy holy arms are mine to wield;
Against me comes each foe of Thine —
Repeat Thy victory in mine!

Dear Conqueror! Thy words I hear;
Mine, mine the fullness of their cheer!
I, too, the world may overcome;
I, too, may win the heavenly home.

—*Thomas H. Gill*, 1848.

“HAVE patience with me!” How
many times true men are heard to cry

Following Christ

out these words ! As we study our own lives and the nature of God the most wonderful characteristic of our Father is found in His patience. He seems never to be in haste. He has waited six thousand years for men to know and trust Him. He has waited all my life for me to grow into some faint image of what He longs to have me become. Men misunderstand Him, doubt Him, question His ways and His dealings, turn from Him, forget Him, defy Him, curse Him ; yet still He waits patiently. Still His blessings descend ; still He pleads ; still He loves. He will not cast us out.

But we poor mortals find patience the hardest faculty to cultivate. We who are Christians come straight from prayer and church, where God has forgiven us, and finding a brother has wronged us in some little thing are provoked beyond measure, and turn our hearts into

Patience.

stone against him, while we pelt him with bitter words. We who are not Christians at all are always grumbling and complaining. The weather is bad ; the breakfast is poor ; the mail is late ; the servant is slow ; the children are noisy ! It is not easy to be patient, particularly for one who is active, and longs to make the world go to please himself.

LARGENESS OF LIFE.

I. Let us see how we can cultivate so divine a quality. And first, it will help us if we can only acquire the habit of thinking how big life and the world are. Little men, fussy men, impatient men, see things minutely. Little things annoy them. And the great majestic growth of the centuries, the grand flow of the world's civilization, the gradual advance of character, these are unrecognized. The reason children are

Following Christ

so impatient and think a day so long is because they have no perspective ; they are little ; they can only grasp a single hour, a single pleasure. The quality of manhood is bigness, a knowledge of cause and effect, a sight of all the way, a breathing through the little hours of the great infinity of existence, without beginning, without ending. How trifling little issues seem to a man when he grasps the great sweep of forces through the ages ! And while he does not neglect little things, he does not fly into a passion with them, because he knows they are only little. The same truth applies in our dealing with our fellows. If I know how man is a part of the great infinite God, His son, His creation ; if I know He is to live forever and is capable of great things, then to lose patience over him is almost impossible. He must see his faults sooner or later, I cry.

Patience

He must learn the magnificent dignity of living purely, honestly, soberly, righteously; and while I will try to teach and lead him, I will be calm, knowing that changes do not come in a moment. So my peevishness of complaint becomes calm persuasion; my annoyance at wrong becomes rich, dignified indignation; my anger becomes the throbbing of love, which longs for perfection. I lift my poor little heated nervous face up to the great sky and breathe in something of eternity, and lo! calmness and patience come to me.

ACTIVITY.

II. Many people have an idea that activity is the father of impatience, and they are greatly mistaken. Lazy people are generally complaining people. The man who tries to hasten the world's advance towards perfection has an enthusiasm which

Following Christ

makes struggle almost sacramental, and which holds him back from nervous cries of distress. True, there are some active people who are fidgety, but the trouble is they are not really workers. They are like the spectators at the ball game. They fuss and halloa and criticise, but they never touch the ball. The men at the bat or in the line are calm. They do not spend breath in shouting, they save it for action. And there is in all true, brave activity a power which seems to lift the soul up to a divine assurance. "It must come," the struggler cries, and, even if he dies before the coming, yet he sees the end. The reason, we may reverently say, that God asks man to work is that he may be kept faithful and strong. He gave Adam the garden to till; afterwards He gave him the earth to subdue, because in such service the good would appear and the final result be made

Patience

sure. If I keep on trying to lead people to goodness, if I keep on forgiving and forgetting, my love grows stronger, and I have patience because I cannot help it. The men who really love the world are the men who work for the world. The true patriot is the man who gives his best to his country, his city; the man who tries only "to get" is a coward, and has no patience either with his own or other people's failures. If you would be like Christ do what Christ did. Live for men and you will love men, and your love will make you patient.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

III. Jesus was most loving in giving us a measure to guide us which fixes our judgment upon ourselves. It is easy to find fault with others; but when I turn to myself and see how much fault might well be found with me by my fellow-men

as well as by my Father in heaven, I am ashamed. Suppose men dealt with me as I deserve; suppose they knew me as I know myself; suppose they marked my poor motives, my secret longings, my cold heart, my easily discouraged efforts, my cowardice—how they would lose patience with me. And yet in spite of all this, they are wonderfully forgiving. How good my friends are! How considerate of my faults, how constant in their trust. How good God is to me, though He knows me through and through. Surely, in fairness, I should at least be as patient, as trustful, as forgiving as I wish God and my brothers to be towards me. The accent of this parable is on the meanness of the servant who, having been himself so kindly dealt with, was so cruel to his fellow. It makes us indignant. But how is it with us? Am I as kind to others as they are to me? Am I

as indulgent in my criticism as they are towards me? Am I as forgiving of their faults as God is forgiving of my faults? There is where the balance comes in—the glorious balance of the golden rule. In that wonderful book of Mr. E. H. Aitken, called “The Windows of the Soul,” published last year, I read: “This is the birth of fellowship and communion, when two creatures, each perceiving that the other feels as it feels, become ‘fellow-creatures,’ saying within themselves, ‘this is my brother.’” At first simple and almost wholly unconscious, but always beautiful, this bond grows ever stronger and stronger as perception grows fuller.” So, indeed, the very consciousness of a bond created by God and enriched by association and common desires, common failures and common successes, should make us wonderfully patient with one another, even as God is patient with us.

Following Christ

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "But I so easily get out of patience with people." So do I. But if we pray, and try to think of God, and try to realize that life is too big a thing to be filled with irritations, and if we work hard for each other and love each other, then more and more we can govern our emotions, and be calm in our judgments. It has always helped me a great deal, when people have tried my patience, to think how I have tried God's patience, and yet He has remained so lovingly good to me.

2. "But what is patience?" Patience is suffering. You endure. You "suffer long." Of course, it hurts when people vex you. But if you are quiet about it and show kindness and love in return, then you are patient.

3. "Things move so slowly, and remedies for existing evils come so tardily, if they ever come at all! I

Patience

find it hard to have patience towards God." I know, dear child. I know so many cases just like yours, and I am so sorry. God is sorry, too. Do you suppose He lets you suffer for nothing? What if, at the last, when you understand everything, you can thank Him for every trial and hardship? Is it not worth while? "Let patience have her perfect work."

4. "People are very impatient with me, though I do try hard to please them. How does the golden rule work here?" Why, you must do not as they do, but as you wish they would do. Be humble minded, knowing how much they have to be impatient about. And then show your love by refusing to answer back, and by calmly serving and helping them. Such patience will create patience.

Oh, my King, my Jesus, I blush and am ashamed because of my impa-

Following Christ

tience. Forgive me that I have ever complained of Thee or of my troubles. Forgive me that I have ever been peevish or fretful. Show me Thy greatness that I may lose my littleness. Show me how to work that I may learn how to love. And may my heart be so full of trust in Thee that I may reflect Thine image, and do for others what Thou art ever doing for me. For Thine own dear sake. Amen.

IV
JOYOUS SERVICE

IV

JOYOUS SERVICE

ST. MATTHEW xxii. 1-14

Prayer

My heart is resting, O, my God ;
I will give thanks and sing ;
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing.

And a "new song" is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set ;
Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet !

—A. L. Waring.

THIS is one of the most important subjects for the Christian's consideration, and one most often forgotten. We hear a great deal about faith, and trust, and patience, and suffer-

ing, but not much is said about joy. Indeed, some good people have thought that joy belongs to another life. "Here we weep and struggle," they have said; "joy cometh in the morning when we awake in another world." But how can we believe that man alone of all God's creations is to be gloomy and sad? Do not the birds sing, and the flowers wear gay colors and give out fragrance, and the mountain brooks laugh, and even the morning stars sing together? If we view life aright, must we not find cause enough for happiness? Indeed, is not sadness really ingratitude to God, a poor spirit with which to serve Him, making our love heavy and forced? If my friend does me a favor with tears in his eyes and with an aching heart, must I not think his love for me a burden rather than a joy? I often wonder whether much of our

Joyous Service

service to God must not pain Him when He sees how low spirited we are, and how little real deep joy there is in our natures. The fact is that we misrepresent God and religion by our gloom, and so at once grieve Him and keep others away from Him.

LAUGHTER.

I. "Man is the only being whom God has made who can laugh," Dr. Mark Hopkins used to say. Creatures without soul grin; man smiles, and he smiles because conscious of his high destiny. It is not merely because he is ignorant and innocent that a child laughs so much; it is because he is fresh from God's dear hand, and has not learned to smother his happiness with imaginary woes. There is, of course, human laughter which is like "the crackling of thorns under a pot" (Ecclesiastes vii. 6), but that is not genuine glad-

Following Christ

ness. If the heart is full of sunshine then the lips respond. Do not be afraid to smile. Let the hardness break under the warm sunshine of God's precious love. Make yourself glad by considering all that God has done, is doing, and is about to do for you. Let our nature exult in its glorious surroundings; let it see good where others see trouble; let it sing while others groan; for, notwithstanding the strenuous battle of life, there is good everywhere.

SUNSHINE.

II. Foreigners tell us that we Americans make a work even of our pleasure; that we do not know how to be happy. I do not think that is true, and yet there is a tendency amongst us to carry burdens too seriously. Life is not a play, and yet neither is it a tragedy full of awful portents. As we look

Joyous Service

backwards, how easily we see that the terrors we trembled at were really blessings in disguise! We must take life seriously, but not severely. And to help us in this we must have sunshine within.

“There are in this loud stunning tide of
human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide of the ever-
lasting chime ;
Who carry music in their heart
Thro’ dusky lane and wrangling mart ;
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

Now we must go out into this sunshine that we may be blessed and find it mirrored within our hearts. I knew a minister once who told me that when he came back from his visits to the poor and sick, after doing all he could for them, he simply made himself cheerful, knowing that gloom and sadness would incapacitate him for his work, and also reflect upon God’s good-

ness. He would play with his children, or sit down at the piano and play a lively tune, forcing his nature to rise up from sorrow to the mountain top of gladness and love. I have often thought of it. We cannot sympathize any better with suffering by groaning over it. That was the heathen way, and there is some of it in Christianity still. We have all known good women who thought to cheer a sufferer by telling tales of woe! How much better a cheery voice and a bright smile, and a little singing! Wise physicians tell people not to whisper in a sick room; it speaks of death to the patient. Oh, this sunshine of the soul—how good it must seem to the dear, wise Father who loves us so, and longs for our happiness!

HAPPINESS.

III. As a child, I remember my dear mother singing a great deal

Joyous Service

about the house. At night she would sing me to sleep. In the morning she would sing me awake. There is always music associated with my childhood. All service should be joyous. We should sing as we work, in spirit at least. How much easier the sailor's task becomes when he sings with his fellows, "ye-ho"—as they raise the sails or lift the anchor! How much nobler my struggle becomes when I am light-hearted and joyous! Indeed, any service rendered slowly and heavily is unworthy. "Duty" is a poor word; it is prose. "Privilege" is poetry. "Will you do this for me?" I ask my boy, and at once he and his little sister are on their feet, seeing which can outstrip the other, while my heart beats with delight. Can God be otherwise than hungry for a like service from us, measured not by "I must," but by "I wish to"? Ah, it is a great

Following Christ

secret in work to be happy over it, and to count it a pleasure! It makes the work beautiful, the worker contented, God comforted, and the world amazed to see how religion has its burdens made light.

EASE.

IV. Easy work is not the work which is trifling, but the work which is done without fret. Dear old thirty-seventh Psalm: "Fret not"—what a lesson! He is not at ease who does nothing, but he is at ease who works, even here and now, without overweariness; that is, without weariness of mind and spirit. The body may be tired, but that is nothing, if only the heart is at rest. People make their lives a great deal harder than they need be by thinking of themselves so much, fearing overwork, dreading sickness, hesitating in the face of toil. It is not work that kills men, but worry;

Joyous Service

and what is worry but fretfulness, and what is fretfulness but lack of cheerfulness and free-spirited joy? If you would know how to work, throw yourself into it; hold nothing back; let there be no stiffness of mind or body. When I was a boy our old gymnasium teacher used to say when we walked or ran: "Now, let your muscles relax, put no restraint anywhere; let mind and body and spirit move unbound together." A great truth! Anne Payson Call's little book, "Power Through Repose," has much in it that is suggestive spiritually and morally, as well as physically. God's work (and all work is God's work if we have any business to be doing it at all), God's service, demands a glorious relaxation of all our powers in the sunshine of His dear love for us and our love for Him. He who loves to work for God because he loves God and because he knows

Following Christ

God loves him, works easily and joyously.

“In Thine own service make us glad and free,
And grant us nevermore to part with Thee.”

DIFFICULTIES.

1. “But did not Christ speak of crosses and of burdens?” Yes, but He did not tell us to groan under or over them. He placed before us a magnificent example of free service when He suffered. “Jesus, therefore, bearing His cross went forth;” what a grand expression—“bearing”; it speaks of such free, spontaneous action. There was joy in His heart, for He was going to die for His children.

2. “But Christ Himself was sad; He wept, but we are never told that He laughed.” We are told that He rejoiced. (St. Luke x. 21.) And He spoke of the angels rejoicing. And He loved the fields and the birds and the flowers. And He

Joyous Service

took little children in His arms. Is it likely that He said and did these things with outward or inward gloom? Why, the little babies would have been afraid of Him, and so would the children who sang about Him in the temple, if He had not smiled, laughed, drawn them to Him by the blessed sunshine of His divine face and voice and heart!

3. "But is it not a matter of temperament? I am naturally despondent." But you must overcome your erring nature, or let Christ overcome it for you. Look upon despondency as a sin, just as bad in you as lying or stealing in another. Pray God for happiness of spirit, and then—be happy.

4. "Is there not danger of unreality in making myself happy when I do not feel so?" No more than there is danger in doing anything you do not feel like doing. Do not be afraid of unreality; that

Following Christ

is an old Puritan notion, one of the mistakes those dear old saints made. If you love God and long to be cheerful, there can be nothing but merit in your laughter, even though you have to work hard with yourself to let it come.

Oh, my Father, I know well how cross and peevish and despondent I am, and I pray Thee to forgive me. Fill my heart with such love for Thee and such gratitude to Thee that I may prove the "beauty of holiness," and make men love Thee by the sunshine Thou dost create in me, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

V

THE POWER OF SMALL
THINGS

V

THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS

ST. MARK iv. 30-32

Prayer

Jesus, cast a look on me ;
Give me sweet simplicity ;
Make me poor and keep me low,
Seeing only Thee to know.

Make me like a little child,
Of my strength and wisdom spoiled,
Seeing only in Thy light,
Walking only in Thy might.

—*John Berridge*, 1785.

HERE are two distinct and dear lessons for us, and we will try and learn them both.

The first is the lesson of personal simplicity and singleness of charac-

ter. So many of us are compound characters; that is, we are a strange mixture of all sorts of emotions and wishes and ideas, and there is no clear conception of life which we can grasp and hold. We have an idea (an idea, by the way, held by a great many important people, ministers, lawyers, poets, novelists, orators) that it is fine to be a little deep, a little confused and hard to understand; whereas common sense tells us that he and he only is a truly useful man who knows something clearly and definitely and tries to teach it to others. And he only can be a happy man in the highest sense, no matter whether he is deemed learned or not, who has a clear, simple consciousness of life and of right.

SIMPLE IN NATURE.

I. A grain of mustard seed is strangely simple. Possibly chem-

The Power of Small Things

istry might reveal great and undreamed of properties in it, but the ordinary eye sees only a very little, pretty bit of matter. Man should be equally simple in nature. Simplicity means naturalness, unaffectedness, reality. How easily we can tell the natural from the artificial in men! You can mark the difference amongst the young folk who are graduating from our schools and colleges, and amongst the people you meet at summer boarding places. Some are so real; as a young friend of mine expressed it, "they are just themselves," meaning, I suppose, that they are not trying to be like somebody else! Others are unfathomable; you never know what they are, and they do not know, probably, themselves. The outward show, however, is a small matter; it is the character which is indicated that interests us. How many of us can go away alone

Following Christ

and not be confused by our thoughts or imaginations? How many of us can go out amongst people, and struggle in the midst of great forces and trials, with duties pressing on every side, and yet be clear in head and heart? How many of us can see the thousand forces and duties all taking one color and assuming one meaning, just as microbes of a certain class all assume the same tint when chemicals are applied to them, because they make everything serve them? I am sure that is the real thing that proves the mastery of Jesus and explains His influence over us; He was so simple in His nature that everything came in place and order before Him; He was so real that nothing could confuse or perplex Him. Such natural simplicity must be ours.

SIMPLE IN WORK.

II. It is a result of naturalness

The Power of Small Things

that the man works calmly and without strain. One loves to think of the growth of nature, of this mustard seed, for example ; so quiet, so dignified, so living, so earnest, and yet so unobtrusive. Do you remember Arnold's little lines ?

“ One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one,
Though the loud world proclaim their en-
mity—

“ Of toil unsevered from tranquillity ;
Of labor, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplished in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.”

So Jesus worked. It is a magnificent study in the gospels just to see how He met the many needs of His life, and invariably with a simple realness which alone proved Him God. How fussy we are in our work ! How fretful, how confused, how uncertain, how full of cries for

Following Christ

advice ! If life means one thing for us, how can we become so excited and unsettled ? Why can we not take every demand, and give every order, and touch every issue with that exquisite mastery, enthusiastic and full of life, but simple and easily understood, which the Christ always displayed ? It is possible for us, in a measure, at least. Work will be so clear, because we ourselves are so clear, that we will calmly do it ; no matter for apparent failures, no matter for criticisms, no matter for heart ache because of loneliness or the refusal of men to do right ; we will work, not as mechanical creatures who have lost enthusiasm, but as inspired men who know.

Our second lesson concerns the power of little things. Life is made up, like a mosaic, of little parts, each alone of slight importance, yet each necessary.

The Power of Small Things

LITTLE ENDEAVORS.

III. We can never do all our work at once ; it comes a section at a time. As I was journeying last week I noticed how the railroad was divided into sections ; so it was built, so it is controlled. Life is the same ; each act has its place and importance, and the whole will be measured by the character of its parts. Nor can the result fail. It may seem at times almost imbecile to think we can help make the world perfect by taking one poor little waif and teaching him, or by doing our daily task well, adding our figures or setting the house in order ; but nature, experience, God, all teach us that it is so, and that like the growth of the tiny mustard seed so is the growth of the universe life, whether of matter or character. Like the pattern of a tapestry it becomes beautiful as each thread takes its part.

Following Christ

LITTLE SERVICES.

IV. Ah, we all know how life is made up of little kindnesses. We are so apt to esteem them lightly, but they are mighty. I do not think I can make the lesson clearer than by quoting a few verses which I found during my college years, and which have been a comfort to me ever since.

The look of sympathy, the gentle word
Spoken so low that only Angels heard ;
The secret act of pure self-sacrifice,
Unseen by men, but marked by Angels' eyes ;
These are not lost.

The sacred music of a tender strain
Wrung from a poet's heart by grief and pain,
And chanted timidly, with doubt and fear,
To busy crowds who scarcely pause to hear ;
It is not lost.

The silent tears that fall at dead of night
Over a life which once was pure and white ;
The prayers that rise like incense from the
soul,
Longing for Christ to make it clean and whole ;
These are not lost.

The Power of Small Things

The happy dreams that gladdened all our youth,
When dreams had less of self and more of truth ;
The childlike faith so tranquil and so sweet,
Which sat like Mary at the Master's feet ;
These are not lost.

The kindly plans devised for others' good,
So seldom guessed, so little understood ;
The quiet, steadfast love that strove to win
Some wanderer from the woeful ways of sin ;
These are not lost.

Not lost, O Lord, for in Thy city bright
Our eyes shall see the past by clearer light ;
And things long hidden from our gaze below
Thou wilt reveal, and we shall surely know
They were not lost.

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "How can I gain this simplicity of character, when I am always confused ?" By thinking always of the purpose of your life, viz. : To grow better and to help the world to grow better. And then count it as a sin to be shunned

Following Christ

to be in doubt or restless with anxiety.

2. "Can I surely know that what I do, no matter how small, is for final good?" Indeed, you can. It is taught in every blade of grass you see these summer months, in every leaf, in every drop of water, in every breath of air. Every little thing done "in His name" has a place and a reward.

3. "My greatest difficulty is in the world; it is so hard to see how simplicity is to be found in the common lives of men." It is not found there; that is just the trouble; and you and I are to bring it there, just as Jesus brought it to the whole world. We must teach men, by example and by word, that "the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed," simple in character and action, simple in its parts and in its influence.

The Power of Small Things

Blessed Jesus, when Thou seest me confused and heavy with perplexity, come near and make me simple and true. Keep me calm in the midst of trouble, natural in the midst of life, trustful as I work at my daily task. And oh, help me, dear Friend, to be at peace, because Thou art near to bless and guide. Amen.

VI

DO NOT WORRY

VI

DO NOT WORRY

ST. MATTHEW vi. 25-34

Prayer

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed ; give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give ; that our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that, by Thee, we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen. — *Ancient prayer for peace*, 494 A. D.

THERE is nothing in the world or in the human disposition that kills as many people as does worry. It is the secret cause of the condition of nine-tenths of the sick people, the

Following Christ

nervous folk, the insane. It makes men weak and cowardly, it makes women hysterical, and saddest of all, it turns away the heart from God and bids us worship the idol of despair. Sometimes people excuse it by saying they cannot help it; sometimes they say they were born with anxious dispositions. But no matter for the cause, or the physical or metaphysical explanation of the condition, we know two great facts: one is that it is wrong to worry; the other, that we can conquer the temptation to worry if we try. It is wild and wicked for us men and women to go on wearing ourselves out, weakening our work and making ourselves nuisances, by anxious feelings and thoughts and words and deeds and habits. The Bible says: "Fret not" — (Ps. xxxvii. 1). "Let not your heart be troubled"—(St. John xiv. 1). "Take no thought for the morrow"—(St.

Do Not Worry

Matthew vi. 34). "Cast all your care upon God"—(1 Peter 5-7). The wise physician says: "Be calm, rest, throw care aside." Surely we should obey. But can we? Certainly, if we ask God to help us. Let us consider some of the things we must do.

COMMON SENSE.

I. God has given us reason, that by it we may control our passions and lift ourselves above the unreasoning brute. And as soon as we begin to reason we see how absolutely foolish it is to worry. It accomplishes nothing. It destroys vitality. It drives away happiness. It opens the door to a host of evils which come flooding in to ruin us. Now if we use our will power, asking God to guide us, we can force worry away. Some years ago I found some rules which I cut out of a newspaper and placed in my desk.

Following Christ

Here they are, and they speak right on this line of common sense.

“DON'T WORRY” RULES.

1. Cultivate a spirit of gratitude for daily mercies.

2. Realize that worrying is an enemy which destroys your happiness.

3. Realize that it can be cured by persistent effort.

4. Attack it definitely as something to be overcome. It wastes vitality and impairs the mental faculties.

5. Realize that it never has done and never can do the least good.

6. Help and comfort your neighbor.

7. Forgive your enemies and conquer your aversions.

8. Induce others to join the “Don't Worry” movement.

TRUST.

II. God, because He is God, is both able and willing to manage everything. He has given me my part to do because He wishes me to help Him and to realize that my life means something. But like a great loving Father He stands ready

Do Not Worry

to guide my efforts and rectify my mistakes. I love that declaration in 2 Corinthians xiii. 8: "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." God stands as a divine and mighty King of righteousness, and we cannot defy Him. Therefore it is the part of wisdom to trust Him. If you say it is difficult to rely upon Him, I ask you if it is difficult to rely upon men in this world? You take a train and you have never even seen the engineer who is to make you go along at the rate of thirty miles an hour; yet you sit down quietly and read your paper, or you make your appointment to meet some one at such a place and hour, relying upon the train's arrival. Why? Because experience has taught you that you can trust a man whom you do not know by sight. You put your money in the bank and leave it. Probably you do not know a

Following Christ

single officer or clerk of that bank by sight, yet you trust them with your money, and draw against your deposit with no doubt. Now trust in God is exactly like that, only it never fails. The train may be late, or run from the track; the bank may fail; but God is sure. There is no such thing as misplaced confidence in religion.

HAPPINESS.

III. A cheerful disposition can be cultivated, and it ought to be if we would be Christian gentlemen and gentlewomen. No one has any right to go about scowling and grumbling, with eyebrows contracted and wrinkles on the forehead. It shows a want of refinement. There should always be sunshine in the speech and on the face, and that it may be there it should be in the heart. Heart-happiness! oh, it can be brought even to the

Do Not Worry

most despondent nature and at the saddest of times if we will. I heard last week a touching story of a gentleman who called, in London, on a poor old woman who had been confined to her bed many years, and yet was so full of cheer that she made all who talked with her happy. The gentleman afterwards met John Bright, the great English leader, and said to him: "Mr. Bright, you must have your moments of despondency when measures you are advocating are defeated: what do you do at such times?" "Why," answered Mr. Bright, "I always go to such a place (mentioning the poor invalid's humble room) and find cheer and hope." Ah, how possible it is to be happy if we will! The poor invalid found it possible, even in sickness and suffering; it became her second nature. So did Mr. Bright learn that he must treat worry and doubt

Following Christ

and despondency like other sins and diseases and have them driven away. The happy-hearted are they who will not suffer burdens to oppress them, because they love God and trust Him.

HE CARETH.

IV. "Your Father knoweth," said Jesus. The little child tells his story to the mother and then leaves it; "mother will fix it all right." Ah, sweet confidence of childhood! And will not God do as much for His children? The secret of peace is for us in the telling of the story. It is like an unburdening of the spirit, a casting away of care.

It is this confession to God which brings relief. "My God, I leave it with Thee. I cannot do this work; I cannot unravel this snarled skein of experience; I cannot see my way. But lead Thou me on." À Kempis, in speaking of the way of peace, says:

Do Not Worry

“Be desirous, my son, to do the will of another rather than thine own. Choose always to have less rather than more. Seek always the lowest place, and to be beneath every one. Wish always and pray that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee. Behold, such a man entereth within the borders of peace and rest.”

The care for temporal affairs, love of riches, social ambition, these are among the many things concerning which we are careful and troubled. We learn not to worry when we seek God first, and talk to Him, and love Him, and cast all our life at His feet.

DIFFICULTIES.

1. “But we must plan for to-morrow, and think about eating and drinking.” Yes, only let such planning and thought be without anxi-

ety, and secondary to our thought of God and His will. Worry is caused by giving too prominent a place in life to comparative trifles, and by forgetting the real life of loving service. It is all right to plan for your breakfast to-morrow, but if you spend more time over it than you do in praying or Bible reading or doing kindness to others, then worry enters, and with worry, sin.

2. "Is not worry constitutional?" Everything good or bad, in a sense, is constitutional, that is it is governed and controlled by our physical and mental characteristics. But our part is to master these characteristics; and in the general average there is not much difference between men. If I am phlegmatic and you are nervous we each have corresponding temptations, but neither of us can find any excuse in our natures. Do not say: "I can't help

it. I was born so." But say: "I will help it."

3. "Does worry necessarily imply a doubt of God? May I not really trust Him, and yet be anxious about seeing Him?" I must answer frankly that faith in God demands confidence, and worry is the enemy of confidence. Many people worry even about religious work. I have heard of ministers worrying about their sermons. Now if God has given me a work to do can I not trust Him for help, and while I do my best and work hard, leave the result to Him? It is religious worry that makes much of our church work a failure, and hurts the dear Master's cause. Be calm. Trust. Be still. Wait. Believe. Fret not. And see how peace and strength will follow.

Dear Master, teach me how to be calm and trustful. I know well

how I dishonor Thee by my anxious thoughts. Speak to me. Touch me. Say to me and my life: "Peace—be still." And may my spirit be so happy in Thy service that even in trials I may find Thy message, and even in disappointments I may see Thy hand. Amen.

VII

ARE YOU DOING YOUR BEST ?

VII

ARE YOU DOING YOUR BEST ?

ST. MATTHEW xxv. 14-30.

Prayer

Full well I know I have more tares than wheat—
Brambles and flowers, dry stalks, and withered leaves ;

Wherefore I blush and weep, as at Thy feet
I kneel down reverently, and repeat :

“ Master, behold my sheaves ! ”

So do I gather strength and hope anew ;

For well I know Thy patient love perceives
Not what I did, but what I strove to do—
And though the full, ripe ears be sadly few,
Thou wilt accept my sheaves.

THIS is a wise interpretation of the parable of the talents. Our Lord wished to teach us to do our

Following Christ

best according to our abilities. There was no difference between the man with five talents and the man with two, either in the work or its rewards. It is human conceit to think the man who rules over much is superior to him who rules over little. Divine judgment measures character, not bigness. And the question is not, "have I a large profit," but "have I honestly done my best."

This time of the year, too, suggests such a line of thought. Harvests are being gathered in. The great fields of the West have given their millions of bushels; the little farms in the valleys of the Alleghanies or the Berkshires have given their tens. One is as important as the other. The measure of land is its response to demand; there lies its value; and that response again is measured by the fidelity of the husbandman. "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?"

Are You Doing Your Best?

asked Naomi of Ruth. As we see the ripened fruits this autumn, may we not hear a voice asking each one of us: "Where and how hast thou gleaned to-day, and what has the world gained from thy service?" No matter for great things or wonderful things in human sight; the question is, have we tried hard to do our very best?

HIGH IDEAL.

I. In order to do our best work we must have a lofty conception of what the work ought to be. The man who is satisfied with chromos can never become a good artist or utilize his powers. The man who thinks his city or community can only be moderately good will never be at his best as a citizen. The man who is satisfied simply "to pass" his examinations will never accomplish much as a student. "If we cannot reach the stars, we must try

Following Christ

to get as near to them as we can," said a wise writer. The best within us must strive to reach the best without us. Even common duties must be done with a noble spirit, and the little things of life must become glorious because of the way in which men meet them. Life is to become perfect, not through the single great acts of individuals, but through the common efforts of all. Mountain peaks do not show the general altitude of a country; the plains must be above the sea-level to secure pure air. Therefore, if I would reach my highest I must aim at the highest. The "I" who is to be must carry forward the "I" who is, and the earth as she will be when redeemed must be the inspiration of my earthly work. So if you would do your best, keep a high ideal before you. Do not be contented with ordinary success; aim at extraordinary things. God blesses us in our

Are You Doing Your Best?

efforts and purposes more than in our achievements. The achievement, after all, is His doing; the character developed by our lofty struggle is ours.

WORTHY MOTIVE.

II. You cannot attain your best unless the motive of your life is clear and pure. "Why am I doing this?" That is the question a true man should keep asking himself repeatedly, that he may be able to detect his motives and govern them. For even a high attainment may be a failure in its result if a low desire has incited to the struggle. Undoubtedly the reason so many men fail in responsible positions is because they have reached those positions with sordid motives. To make money, to gain applause, to feel the thrill of power—do you suppose any ruler of city or state or country can be nobly successful who has had

such motives to force him in the struggle? If you do your work because you must, or to get through with it, or to bring for yourself human praise, do you suppose you can possibly do your best? Some one asked me once why the little creatures of earth do such perfect work, the worm with his chrysalis, the bee with his honeycomb, the spider with his web, the bird with his nest. The answer was that the motive placed as an instinct by God in each creature's body had a single character, namely, the fulfillment of a purpose, the purpose which the chrysalis or the honeycomb or the web or the nest had to subserve. Well, it is so with you. For what are you adding those figures, studying those books, keeping your store, pursuing your profession, washing your dishes, teaching those children? Is there a purpose of which you are not ashamed inspir-

Are You Doing Your Best?

ing and energizing you? Good work in the sight of human judges may be done by men of selfish motives. The best work as seen by God can only result from honest desire. You and I are never at our best when we are self-conscious; and self-consciousness can only be killed by a grand, pure motive which enters into all we do and all we are.

COURAGE.

III. A timid man, a discouraged worker, a sad-hearted struggler can never do the best work of which he is capable. The timid man is afraid to let out his forces. The discouraged man thinks there is no use in exercising his forces. The sad-hearted man has weakened his forces so that they cannot respond to a call. It is not merely cheerfulness in our work that we need; it is downright faith, honest, whole-souled, daring. All the great dis-

coverers and inventors and heroes have been men of almost credulous confidence in the possibilities before them. Old Christopher Columbus, bless him ! would have turned back on his voyage had he not dared to "know" that there was land ahead. Abraham Lincoln would have despaired had he not rejoiced in that which he did not live to see—a united land freed from slavery. Try to do your best with a question whether it pays, or whether there is any hope of success, or whether life is not a great cloudy experience, and you will fail. The best in us comes up through confidence, and it is kissed into power by smiles of hope, and it is led on by shouts of victory, and crowned by beautiful patience. I do my best work not when all the world is smoothly gliding along an easy course, and trouble is unknown, and rest is frequent. No ; my best is born out of struggle, when days are

Are You Doing Your Best?

short, and demands are crowding and difficulties hinder, and enemies cry, "halt." "The best" is born of contest and is colored by blood. And it is measured in God's glorious presence not by banners, or human plaudits, or sounding trumpets, but by the amount of my virtue which has entered into it. Those glorious lines of Story tell about it.

"While the voice of the world shouts its chorus,

Its pæan for those who have won;

While the trumpet is sounding triumphant,

And high to the breeze and the sun

Gay banners are waving, hands clapping,

And happy, hurrying feet

Rushing after the laurel-crowned victors —

I stand on the field of defeat,

In the shadow, 'mong those that are fallen,

And wounded, and dying—and there

Chant a requiem low, place my hand

On their pain-knotted brows, breathe a prayer,

Hold the hand that is helpless, and whisper,

'They only the victory win

Who have fought the good fight, and have
vanquished

Following Christ

The demon that tempts us within :
Who have held to their faith unseduced
By the prize that the world holds on high;
Who have dared for a high cause to suffer,
Resist, fight, if need be, to die.' "

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "But to do one's best is almost impossible." I do not think so. One of the prizes which I value most of those that came to me in my school days was the first one I received, and I can hear now the voice of dear old Professor Charlier saying as he handed it to me: "This prize is given to this pupil because he has tried." Pardon the personal allusion. But it seems to me the whole truth lies there. It is the effort to do our best that proves us earnest. No man ever tries without succeeding in some measure.

2. "And yet I fail." Why, of course you seem to fail. No man who is true ever succeeds in his own estimation. The ideal is so high

Are You Doing Your Best?

that we do not reach it. No painter is satisfied with his picture. No author thinks his book finished. I once heard of a great preacher who drew thousands to church, and after every sermon as he fell on his knees he cried: "Dear Lord, I have failed; but bless my failure to the end that men may be saved." And that sweet little hymn of Anna Warner's, "One more day's work for Jesus," has such a dear ending:

"Lord, if I may,
I'll serve Thee better another day."

3. "I suppose that is life; just failing, and trying to make the best of it all through." Now, my dear friend, you are all wrong. Life is nothing of the kind. It is a series of glorious successes, with growing love, and more fervent zeal, and happy hope. Doing your best is satisfying to God even if it is not satisfying to you. And when you

Following Christ

see it all as God sees it and intends you to see it some day, you will know how all the while you were making great strides, and winning noble victories. If every man tried to do his best earth would turn into heaven.

Blessed Christ, I thank Thee for this message. I can do little for Thee compared with what Thou hast done for me. But I can love Thee, and teach others to love Thee. I can be kind, and gentle, and honest, and brave, and pure. And wilt not Thou, oh dear Master, take my efforts and make them successes, so that my best may become Thy best, and my efforts Thy victory? Only let me never sink back and be contented with feeble work, and heartless struggle. Keep me living, dear Christ, in will and deed. For Thine own sake. Amen.

VIII
ALWAYS READY

VIII

ALWAYS READY

ST. LUKE xii. 35-40 ; xxi. 20-30

Prayer

“ I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain, or plain, or sea ;
I’ll say what you want me to say, dear Lord ;
I’ll be what you want me to be”.

ALWAYS ready for what ? Death ?
It was the old idea, that life meant
preparation for death. But we know
that no man is ready to die who is
not ready to live ; that is, the work
we have to do here and now, if done
in God’s name and with all our
hearts, is the best proof that we

Following Christ

are ready to go to a higher work in a better land. Readiness, then, must mean a quickness to hear God's voice, a promptness to respond to our brother's cry, a keenness to see the Master and to know Him when He meets us, and a calmness of faith in the midst of surprises.

READY TO HEAR.

I. God is always speaking, but our ears are dull. We have not listened, sometimes, when He called, and so our spiritual senses are hardened. That was Balaam's trouble. He trifled with God, and so he fell into that condition in which God seemed to contradict Himself. "With the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward." (Ps. xviii. 26.) The child does not answer when the mother calls; soon he does not hear the mother-voice. I remember living once in the West near a large factory with the loud-

Always Ready

est whistle I have ever heard in my life. When it blew in the early morning the first night I slept in the house I sighed and said: "Well, I shall be roused up at this hour daily." But I went to sleep again. The next morning I only faintly heard the sound, and the third morning I slept through it. The key to sensation is obedience. When God speaks I must answer, like Samuel: "Here am I." It is this quick response to our Father's voice which is at once the fascination and the power of living. If I am keen enough to hear the message spoken from the flowers, or to understand the voices speaking from the firmament, or to catch the broken accents of humanity's almost inarticulate cry of bitter need, then also I can have the infinite delight of hearing that "still, small voice" speak to me in the quiet of my own soul, saying: "I love thee; Peace, be

Following Christ

still." Ah, the infinite joy of that!

READY TO HELP.

II. Thomas Carlyle, in his "Sartor Resartus," has such a fine picturing of needy humanity's cry of trouble. And, indeed, it demands no imagination to hear the language which is but a cry of want, of sorrow, of hunger, of spirit. You walk through the streets, you hear the voices, you see the faces, you mark the deeds of men, and how eloquently they cry for strength, for comfort, for hope, for satisfaction! I often sit in a car and watch the faces of my fellow-passengers; it seems to me I can read the history of hunger in every face, no matter how disguised, and the desire to help is almost unendurable. The hardest thing about the dear Christ for us to understand is how He could have seen this want and

heard this cry for thirty-three years and not have given satisfaction at once in every case. The only answer must lie in His greater wisdom, because He knew that it was better for men to hunger and so be led to seek for the best food, than to be satisfied before they knew their want; and also in this, that there must be a readiness to accept help before help can be given. I can imagine the Lord going to some Jew and saying, "Let Me help you," only to be repulsed with the cry, "I want nothing." The recognition of the need must prepare the heart for help. But when the opportunity comes, then to be ready! To watch for the moment when the right deed can be done, and the right word spoken, oh, this is the readiness of God Himself, who waits and waits for us to let Him help us! The noble spirit of service is found in patient watchfulness; to

watch that no opportunity may escape us; to be patient that no delay may make us lose heart.

READY TO KNOW THE LORD.

III. Why did not Mary know Christ when she first saw Him after the resurrection, and why did not the disciples know Him on the way to Emmaus? It must have been because they had no idea He was anywhere near them. "He is dead," they said, one to another. I am afraid a great many Christians say the same thing to-day, and so they do not see the Christ, though He passes them again and again. A sorrow comes; oh, how hard it is to bear it! We are full of doubt, full of bitterness, full of rebellion, and the dear Christ, who has come to help and comfort us, who calls to us to let Him take the burden and carry it for us, passes near us, and we never know Him! We are not

ready, we are not looking for Him. A joy comes. We are so happy, so delighted. We tell every one about it—except Jesus, and He, the dear, dear Christ, who sent it, and is lingering near to have us thank Him by just a word or look, passes sadly by, unrecognized! The joy was so big that it hid Him Who sent it. We are busy working; our business absorbs us or our church work takes our time and attention; we do so long to accomplish our purpose, we are so busily active; yes, so absorbed and so busy that we do not lift our eyes to the dear Christ-face sorrowfully lingering near and longing to hear us say: "I am doing it for Thee, dear Lord." I have a dear friend. Oh, how I love him! I think of him, I talk to him, I watch for his coming, I am so happy when I hear his step or his voice! And the lonely, friendless Man of Nazareth, who sent me

my friend and who was lonely on earth, just that I might not be lonely, passes by with such a wistful face to see if in my love He has any place or thought or prayer, and I see Him not! Why are we so blind? Can we never be true enough or grateful enough or ready enough to love God first, and know that but for Him there could be no love?

READY TO TRUST.

IV. Life is full of surprises, and we never seem to get used to them. Dangers threaten, and we are always frightened. Cares multiply, and we are worried. Sometimes men grow cold and indifferent to everything, like the old Greek Stoics. Sometimes a miserable fashion, which the French call "blasé," seizes people and they grow disgusted with everything, hardened alike to true beauty and the mystery of pain. But these

folk are never ready, any more than a drunken man or a corpse is ready. There is no life in them. He only is ready to meet whatever experience may come who can trust God. He only has the true grace of living who can calmly meet surprises and exigencies, because he knows "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." This trust must be almost spontaneous to be healthy. I do not really trust my friend if I have to reason out the why and the wherefore of my confidence. Doubtless there must be reason at the foundation of all faith, but for a man to go and look at the foundation and examine it every time he is perplexed is as foolish as for a man to go and examine the foundation of his house every time the wind rattles his windows. "Right is right, since God is God." "There is no danger; God is here. This is Bethel." (Gen. xxviii. 16.)

Following Christ

Ah, how restful such confidence as that! A man is ready to trust always who can know God is not afar off, but at hand to succor and to bless.

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "Christ seems to speak of the end of the world in the lesson; are we not to be ready for it?" Yes; but the readiness for the end is the readiness for the beginning. That is, we must have Christ so near and so real always that His coming cannot surprise us. And the way to welcome the King when He comes is to welcome our Jesus now in our hearts.

2. "Is it possible to realize Christ's presence?" Yes. By thinking of Him, talking to Him, acknowledging His presence and power, seeing Him in everything and hearing His voice everywhere, we come to know He is near instinctively. My friend need not speak when we sit together in

Always Ready

the dark; I know he is there. So it should be and can be with our knowledge of Christ's presence.

3. "Can I not be ready and yet go on calmly doing my work?" Ah, of course you can. It is folly to stop our duties to look for some strange thing. Christ must find us faithful in little things if we would rule in great things.

4. "But this readiness is a strain; it implies constant watchfulness." On the contrary, it is perfect calm and rest. If a man is ready he is not anxious, or nervous, or fussy. A man who is in time for his train does not run. So real watchfulness is a trust and an activity united. I wait while I work.

Dear Lord, help me to see Thee and know Thee all the time. Thou art coming in every experience, in every joy, in every sorrow of my

Following Christ

life, and I would fain keep mine eyes open and my ears ready, for in Thy presence there is peace. Let me not grow dull through disobedience ; let me not grow careless through pleasure. But speak to me when Thou seest me wander or waver, and call me back to Thee, for Thine own dear sake. Amen.

IX
THINGS THAT ENDURE

IX

THINGS THAT ENDURE

ST. MATTHEW vii. 21-27

Prayer

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of Thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation ; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by Thy most gracious and ready help. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
—*Old English Prayer.*

“CHANGE and decay in all around I see,” sang Lyte in that beautiful hymn beginning “Abide With Me,” and how true it is ! Everything seems to change. We go back to

old scenes, but they are not as they were when we were children. Something in them has changed, even as we ourselves have changed. When I was thirty years old I went back to see the house in which I was born and in which I passed eight happy childhood years. But, oh, how it was changed! Nothing seemed familiar. It looked small and dull. All the sunshine which I remembered had gone. Mother was not there. Happy innocence was not there. Hopeful carelessness was not there. As I had changed with the years of study and travel and work, so had the old rooms changed; they were no longer fitted for the demands made upon them. Change is a kind of decay, and yet it is really a healthy decay. The fittest survives in things, as in humanity. Growth implies a loss of old things; new things are necessary for a new life.

Things That Endure

WHAT IS IT TO ENDURE?

I. We must guard against the idea of fixedness as a part of endurance. Wherever there is life there must be growth, advance, greater fullness. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. And yet we know Him as the early Christians did not know Him, as we did not know Him ourselves when we were children. He has not changed, and yet He has become to each age a richer, dearer Christ. Just as the sun is the same sun, yet how different when under a cloud and when in a clear sky! Our point of view seems to change the character of things. Their growing richer and fuller and dearer at each new experience is the proof of their endurance. To endure, then, is never to fail. To endure is to meet with ever greater strength each new demand. To endure is to give an assurance that expectation can never

Following Christ

be disappointed. What a magnificent meaning that gives to the word endure! Jesus the same always; that is, Jesus always ready to meet every need, every cry, every longing. God's truth endureth; that is, His truth can always satisfy; new demands find new riches, new sorrows find new comforts. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved;" that is, he that is always loyal to God, always ready to hear God's voice, shall find salvation. Endure is an active word; it does not mean simply sitting still and bearing, but rather always being prepared to do and to advance. You do not endure when you sit down with a groan to bear your pain, but when you forget your pain in your work.

GOD'S ENDURANCE.

II. God's unchangeableness does not consist in His always saying the same word or always doing the same

Things That Endure

thing. "I am the Lord—I change not;" but that does not mean that He is like a cold statue of some heathen god, with the same expression, the same gesture, the same demand. It rather means that He can never fail us, never disappoint us, never turn away from us. We see this when we study some of His unchangeable attributes—the things of God that endure. His love endures—that is, we can always rely upon it. He loves me to-day; He will love me to-morrow; He loves me when I am prosperous and when I am in trouble, in health and in sickness, by day and by night. His power endures; He can do in the future what He has done in the past. His might is unlimited; we can trust in it. His promises endure; He always keeps them. His Word endures; we can read it and know it is as true to-day as it was a thousand years ago; it is richer and

fuller of meaning, but it satisfies. All this we appreciate the more when we remember how with us these things change. Our love does not endure; it cannot be relied upon. "The saddest of love is love grown cold," and how much there is of it! We make great protests; we are sure we will be true; but time passes, little troubles come, unworthiness appears, "familiarity breeds contempt," and love is dead. Our power cannot last. We think it will, as we feel our muscle or measure our influence; but the muscle grows flabby and our influence wanes, and we are powerless. "I cannot help you"—the pathos of it rests upon the word "cannot." We do not keep our promises, try though we may. Our pledges we break in spite of ourselves. That is why we turn so hungrily to Jesus. He is the same; He endures; He never fails.

Things That Endure

TRIAL BEARING.

III. The Latin and Greek words for endure imply undergoing a test or a trial. Sometimes all goes well while the sun shines, but all goes ill in the cloud. The old saying, "When poverty comes in at the door love flies out at the window," is not always true, yet it has a suggestion of great force, namely, that the only real virtue is that which has stood a test and remained steadfast. The silly girl who asked her lover if he loved her enough to throw himself over a precipice for her sake had a bit of wisdom after all somewhere in her head; she wanted to know if the fellow's love could stand a severe test. All character is formed thus through trial. We do not speak of a boy's character; it is unformed, he has not been tested. But we speak of a man's character; if he has any it has been formed by the hard strokes

of experience. So the house on the rock stood, the house on the sand fell; it was a test of their endurance when the floods came and the winds blew, and one was proved strong, the other weak. "God is testing me"—what an inspiration there is in that, when trouble or distress or pain or loneliness comes! God is seeing whether I really trust Him, whether I can be calm in the midst of the storm, steady while a hundred forces are trying to down me, loving even in the midst of contradictions. Even so, we must say it reverently, is the dear God Himself tested by us, and oh, what endurance He has! We try Him by doubts, by fears, by sins. We question His word, we complain under His guidance, we cry out bitterly under His teaching. Yet He loves on, He continues to guide and to teach and to care. Our worst storms of passion cannot change Him; when

Things That Endure

the wrath and tears pass from us
and we can see, there He is, the
same dear, dear Father, smiling,
with His hands stretched out!

“I thought His love would weaken
As more and more He knew me;
But it burneth like a beacon,
And its light and heat go through me.
And I always hear Him say,
As He comes along His way :
‘O silly souls, come near Me;
My sheep should never fear Me,
I am the Shepherd true.’ ”

ENDURING WORKS.

IV. It is a question with many, since they have so little endurance themselves, whether anything they do can last. And, indeed, much of our work seems to fall to dust before the evening. Yet surely work done from a pure motive, for Jesus' sake, must endure. All our labor cannot be lost. Some of the many seeds sown will bring fruit. Some of the

many words spoken will find a place in human hearts. "What is done for God can never die." Therein lie at once our inspiration and our comfort. What I do for men to gain their praise, their applause, their favor, will sink like the house on the sand; it has no foundation. Bitterly have hearts lamented their vain expenditure when too late, lonely, deserted, forgotten, they have sat with the wrecks of life all about them, and cried with poor old Wolsey :

"Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness."

But the work for God is so dear, because so understood, so appreciated, so blessed! Men may turn away from us, leave us, suspicion us—no matter. God knows. And time proves the worth of our deeds. A good work proclaims itself. It is said that in the

Things That Endure

uncovered walls of long buried Nineveh the difference between good and bad work can easily be seen. So some day even men will know what we have done well. The good labor will endure and the benediction come.

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "Is not the unceasing change of our modern life a hindrance to endurance?" It may be to endurance of character. Quietness has much to do with strength. And yet, if we remember that endurance means a readiness to respond to demands, it may be that this very un-fixedness of modern life presents greater opportunities. Remember that endurance is not symbolized by the great mountain, but rather by the ocean giving a quick response to every emotion, a clear answer to every cry.

Following Christ

2. "This is just my trouble, that I cannot endure. I change so easily in all my feelings. To-day I am full of affection, to-morrow full of hate." Do not trust too much to emotion, and do not judge by comparing day with day. See whether there is not a greater steadiness of character as year follows year; whether love and religion do not really mean more than they used to; whether you are not more careful to keep your promises and to do God's will.

3. "Is it necessary to believe that all trouble comes from God to test us?" No. Sometimes trouble comes from the devil (see the book of Job), and sometimes we bring it upon ourselves, and neither God nor the devil has anything to do with it. But however it comes, it is a test. If we learn the lesson and stand steady, then we are enduring.

4. "When you say 'God's

Things That Endure

Word endureth,' do you mean that it is exactly the same for each generation?" That is just what I do not mean. God's Word, or the Bible, proves its endurance by its power to satisfy and teach and guide every generation and every kind of man. It helped Paul, and it helps you. It cheered the hiding Christians trembling in the catacombs, and it cheers us sitting in our modern churches with all our religious freedom. It changes in its application, while its great principle remains steadfast. That is the wonderful truth about the Bible which we are just beginning to learn.

Dearest Lord, Thou Who art ever the same, oh! make me to endure. I am so fickle, so emotional, so unreliable; while Thou art so grandly true and strong and real. Let me look upon Thee, that I may become

Following Christ

like Thee. And suffer not the experiences of my life to weaken me; but through them all may I stand, because my love rests upon the rock of Thy love. For my Saviour's sake. Amen.

X

LIVES THAT LIFT UP

X

LIVES THAT LIFT UP

ST. LUKE xiii. 20, 21.

Prayer

O Word, that broke the stillness first,
Sound on, and never cease
Till all earth's darkness be made light,
And all her discord peace.

Till selfish passion, strife and wrong
Thy summons shall have heard,
And thy creation be complete,
O, thou eternal Word.

—*Rev. S. Longfellow.*

“THE Kingdom of God is like leaven.” We all know what leaven, or yeast or baking powder is used for, and how it accomplishes its purpose in making our bread agreeable and healthy. So God's Kingdom, in the world and in a man's heart,

Following Christ

is intended to lift up the world and the man, to make them better, stronger, happier. But there must be more than this in life. It is not merely that I am helped myself; I must prove the fact by being helpful. As the leavened bread becomes itself leaven, if properly treated, so the man who is really lifted up becomes a power to lift others up. Therein lies the difference between good and bad people. A good man is a helpful man; he inspires, cheers, strengthens others. A bad man is a harmful man; he hardens, discourages, weakens others. Lives that lift are the true lives, and they are made true by the Spirit of God, who at once blesses them and makes them blessings.

Let us see some of the ways in which we can lift men up.

EXAMPLE.

I. Consciously or unconsciously,

Lives That Lift Up

we influence others. "No man liveth to himself," and a good example is an influence for good. We like the actions, the character, the speech of a true man; and by that singular quality of human nature, which can never be eradicated because it belongs to the law of growth, viz, imitation, we try to make them our own, or to shape our own after them. We must guard, however, against self-consciousness and against thinking that a good example is necessarily a model. No man who thinks that other men ought to be like him is good for much in the way of influence. He is stilted in manner, unnatural in speech, trembling and hesitating in action, for he is always afraid of making a mistake and so misleading men. What is needed is a good, healthy character, with a high conception of manhood, with a cheery spirit, and a brave determination in action, unselfish, friendly,

Following Christ

not ashamed of being religious, yet never advertising religion, not ashamed of emotion, yet free from sentimentality, strong in all the joy of living, and seeking men for their own sakes. Such a character has a tremendous power. People love it. It attracts them. It presents the best things to them in a normal way, and it has a force when it speaks or acts, born of the confidence it creates. I am more and more convinced that such lives are lifting lives. They invigorate the whole atmosphere in which they move. They may make mistakes, but the mistakes will be forgotten in the strong sweep of goodness and honesty which can never be separated from them. They are far from perfect, but somehow they make men love perfection and strive after it.

SYMPATHY.

II. It is startling sometimes to re-

Lives That Lift Up

alize how little sympathy there is in the world. There is a great deal of speech: "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "I'm so sorry!" But another's condition or need does not become my condition or need by assimilation. In fact, even while I moan my condolence I congratulate myself on my freedom from such difficulties. There are so few who can really enter into my feelings—so few who can honestly grasp a situation. Our novel writers try to play upon this chord, sometimes successfully, as in Edna Lyall's "Donovan," sometimes lamentably unsuccessfully, as in a book I have just been reading—a kind of character study, in which everybody seemed to make self-preservation the first law of life, and only touched with finger tips each other's needs. Yet hearts go on starving, and we let them starve, because it means suffering to feed them, and so there is no lifting of

Following Christ

their lives. To know that every man has some need, to seek keenly and find that need, to try with a big, whole-souled affection to satisfy it—that is sympathy. And when this is not an isolated experience, but a habit of life; when we live simply to do this goodly work for our brothers, in Christ's name, then we are, indeed, leavening powers. We lift men up by our sympathetic lives.

HELP.

III. It is very difficult to know how to help men. As Shakespeare says:

“Like a man to double business bound, I stand in pause where I shall first begin, and both neglect.”

We are often so perplexed that we end in doing nothing. And yet there is no work more deserving of study and more satisfactory in results than this of helping men. It

Lives That Lift Up

demands, first of all, pure unselfishness, for self must be sacrificed. It demands, second, a keen discernment. We must learn to study character. And it demands, third, a balanced use of heart and brain, so that neither pity nor reason shall be lacking. But oh, the delight of lifting men up to high living and noble action! My brother is weak, and he needs a strong impulse to make him victor. My brother is ignorant, and he needs a fresh draught of knowledge to inspire him. My brother is down, and he needs advice and a warm hand to get him on his feet. To go to him and say, "let me help you." To look into his eye with loving confidence. To open up a path he has never tried before. To reveal opportunities he has never seen. This is the help which proves the success of humanity and the power of man over man. "I would rather per-

Following Christ

suade one tempted man to fight till he conquers than to command an army, or hold an audience under the sway of my voice," said a philanthropist. And he said well. A life that lifts is a Christlike life.

HAPPINESS.

IV. And then there is the sunshine of life which lifts men as nothing else can. The reason people love funny books and go to see plays in the theatre which provoke laughter is because they are heavy-hearted and discouraged. If they could know how to find and keep the brightness within themselves which is the heritage of every child of God, they would not need this artificial stimulus, which is so apt to react and leave the heart heavier than before. Granted that there is a God, our Father, Who loves us, Who is caring for us, Who has made countless pleasures for our enjoy-

Lives That Lift Up

ment, Who sent His Son to live and die for us, and Who has prepared a blessed future for us, and how can we help being happy? Sorrow grows from doubt. Gloom is the child of despair. Misery is born of worry. Let the heart say with repeated confidence, "My Father, my dear Father," and peace and joy will result. Those are dear lines of Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

"Talk faith. The world is better off without
Your uttered ignorance and morbid doubt.
If you have faith in God, or man, or self,
Say so; if not, push back upon the shelf
Of silence all your thoughts till faith shall
come;
No one will grieve because your lips are
dumb.

Talk health. The dreary, never changing
tale
Of mortal maladies is worn and stale.
You cannot charm, or interest, or please
By harping on their minor chord, disease,
Say you are well, or all is well with you,
And God shall hear your words and make
them true."

Following Christ

DIFFICULTIES.

1. "I cannot seem to lift my own life. How then can I lift the life of another?" Perhaps this work for another is just what you need to brighten your own character. I have known many a poor, disheartened mortal lifted to the skies by some loving act of service rendered to another. God's leaven sometimes comes to us from the very burdens which we bear for another.

2. "But there are so many lives to lift up. The whole world seems to be either in sin or in sorrow." So much the more reason for you to work hard. A true man is never discouraged by the bigness of the task. It only inspires him to mightier effort; and besides you will soon find out that things are not quite so bad as you think they are.

3. "But does Christ intend life to

Lives That Lift Up

be lifted up now ? Is not heaven to be the place where such a condition shall exist ? ” My dear friend, it is for you and me to bring heaven. We are here not on probation but for education. We must seek the Kingdom of God not by gazing up into heaven (see Acts i. 11), but by working on earth.

4. “ But I grow tired and discouraged in my efforts. People’s lives, work as I will, do not seem to be lifted.” How do you know ? Can you see everything ? Can you measure advance by your human judgment ? Let your life be a leavening life, and leave the rest to God. No work done for Him can fail.

Lift Thou up my life, dear Saviour, that so I may have power to lift other lives. Be Thou to me tender and full of pity. Speak Thou to me clearly and lovingly.

Following Christ

Shed Thou sunshine upon me, that I may be enabled to touch my brothers, because Thou hast first touched me. And oh, dear Christ, make my love for Thee so pure and strong that it shall speak always and everywhere a message of comfort and peace. For Thine own dear sake. Amen.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]



